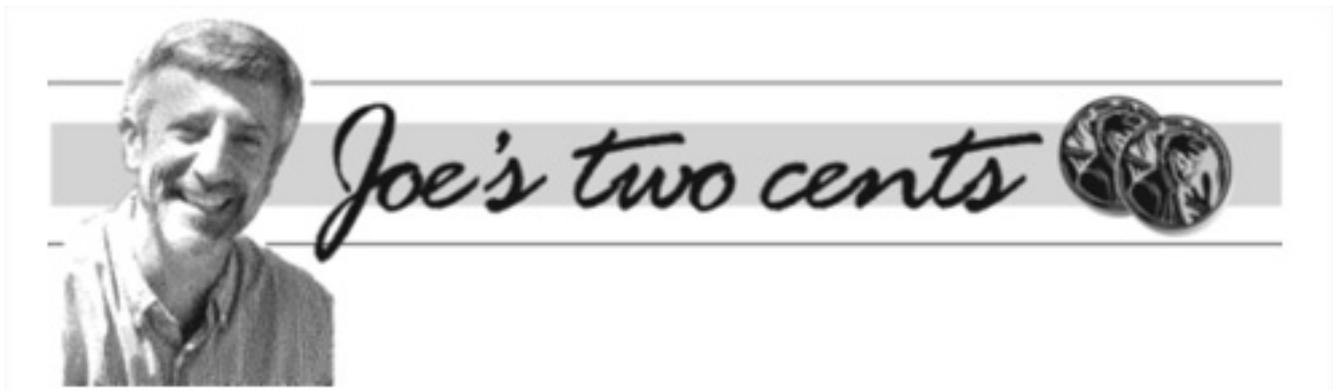




08/14/12 - Shirts ? The Great Cover Up



As I creep closer every day to that next magic age ? the 60-year mark, I've been doing my darnedest to try to keep in shape. I do those daily pushups and sit ups, some curls, some bench presses, and a few miles on the treadmill. Then I sit down with a bowl of ice cream... So there go half the calories I just sweated off. I figure that's just my reward for at least trying.

But despite all that tepid exercise, I'm still in the early stages of developing a guy's well-earned, time-tested capitulation to age ? the venerable pot belly. Now, because I'm full of manly pride, I'll just acknowledge that it's not a large protrusion ? I'd be horrified if it was. It's just at the point where the middle part of my body, as solid as it is, sticks out, on profile, just a bit more than my chest. Life's not over...is it?

Now I've noticed a trend around me lately, from guys in my age bracket, and with bellies much larger than mine. Many are resorting to a coy slate of hand that I'll call the "cover up" shirt. That's when, regardless of the kind of shirt a guy wears, it's always ? that's always ? untucked, whenever he can get away with it.

Now, it's fashionable these days, in some teenage boy circles, to run around with your shirt untucked ? not to mention your pants hanging down to your crotch and whatever underwear you choose to use exposed to the sun. But that's just fashion ? or some warped version of it.

With older guys, it's different.

My theory is that when older guys leave their shirt untucked, it's not fashion at all. It's a survival thing. If you can no longer strut around puffing the chest out ? and you don't want to accentuate the stomach that is sticking out ? you enter "cover up" mode. And the only way to

do that is to untuck your shirt and erase that delineation between the belly and the waist. Voila, instant shape, once again.

Now granted, certain shirts were made to be worn untucked. Like the cherished Hawaiian shirt. It's pretty much a given that you look like a real dork, if you tuck one of those in. Or the polo shirts with the flat cut bottom and the slits on the sides (although I suspect those slits are also there to help accommodate expanding girth). But, guys, when you're sauntering around with your t-shirt untucked or your dress shirt flapping wildly after you've escaped the horrors of the office, or really any kind of short-sleeve shirt or polo shirt that hides the belt (unlike the teenage kids, we do still wear belts), then you're in "cover up" mode. Just admit it.

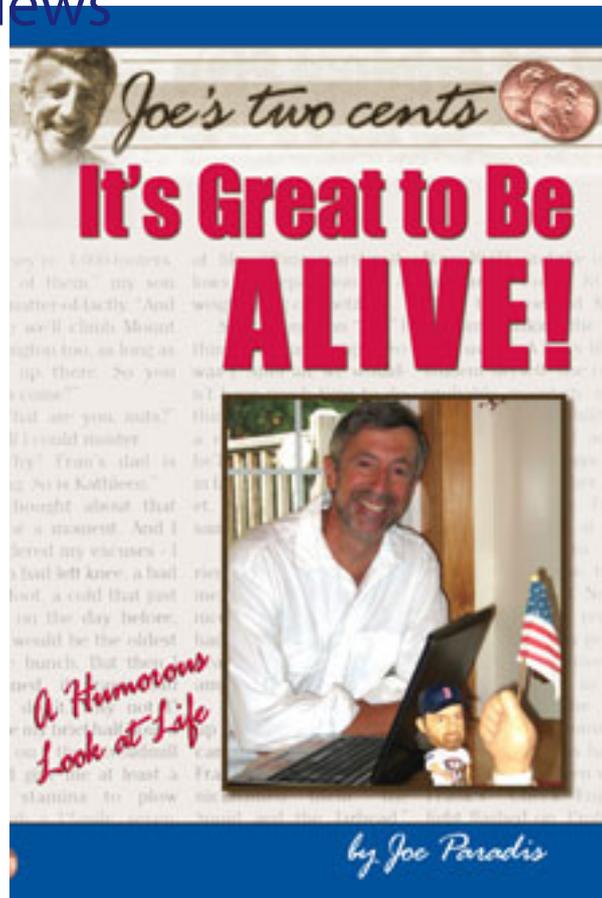
Now some guys are proud of their "cover up" mode ? or at least what it was designed to cover up, which is the belly. They'll wear their shirts untucked, but also unbuttoned. Those are guys who are proud of a protruding work of art that they've spent years sculpting. You'll see plenty of guys like this on the beach. And they're usually wearing ball caps too.

I've not yet succumbed to the "cover up" mode myself. I like to have my shirt tucked into my pants, separating them from my tighty-whities, and keeping my belt and my geeky cell phone holster from chafing my skin. I know that's too much information. But it's true.

Someday, I'm sure I will succumb, although there seems to be a tradition among the guys in my family that shirts stay behind the beltline at all times. So we'll see. In the meantime, as long as I care enough to exercise daily and limit that ice cream intake I should be able to avoid "cover up" mode for awhile. And that'll save me a lot of chafing...

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